Book review: 'Psychological Warfare in the Arab-Israeli Conflict' by Ron Schleifer (2014). New York, NY: Palgrave Macmillan.

The Arab-Israeli conflict has been rigorously studied from a wide range of perspectives, but Ron Scheifer's analysis of psychological warfare (or 'psywar') makes a unique and refreshing contribution to the existing literature in this area. He meticulously charts the use of psychological warfare from the time of the British Mandate of Palestine to the Mavi Marmara Affair of 2010, while drawing upon contemporary ideas in the area of psychological warfare and psywar engagement. The book does lack theoretical depth but makes a series of important points about the role of psychological warfare in this long-standing intractable conflict.

Schleifer defines psychological warfare as encompassing 'all nonviolent activity that aims at realizing the state's goals' (p. 1) and cites as examples the scenarios that in wartime soldiers can be influenced not to pull the trigger or to abandon the battlefield altogether etc. In short, for the author, the term psychological warfare captures the *psychological* processes that can be enacted by one party in order to achieve some degree of influence over the enemy, thereby benefiting one's own cause or position in the conflict. It is noted that psywar has been, and continues to be, employed in a wide range of conflicts, both low-intensity and intractable conflicts alike. Yet, in defining psywar as constituting 'nonviolent activity', Schleifer's book slightly overlooks another important dimension of psywar, namely how small-scale, though horrific acts of violence can nevertheless contribute psychologically to the overarching conflict, as is clearly seen in acts of terrorism which may maim or kill a relatively small group of individuals but severely comprise the psyche of the larger ingroup to which the individuals belong. This is exemplified by the lynching of two Israeli reservists in Ramallah in 2000 which came to inspire horror in the Israeli population. The author does not set out to explore this dimension of warfare or intergroup conflict but this appears too significant to omit from an analysis of psywar.

In the first two chapters, Schleifer explores the various terms that have been used in relation to psywar, examining the terms 'propaganda', 'diplomacy', 'psychological operations' and others, and shows how some of these terms have acquired particular connotations in view of social, historical and political phases and developments, e.g. Nazism. This chapter demonstrates that, while the actual state processes and policies have remained the same (i.e. to convince the ingroup and the enemy of particular versions of events), the terms given to these processes and policies have changed over time. This is important because the terms themselves are essentially constructions of social reality and, while one term may evoke perceptions of safety and insecurity, another may evoke imagery of totalitarianism etc.

In his theoretical overview, Schleifer identifies three basic elements in psywar, namely (1) the target audiences, (2) the messages, and (3) the means of delivery. Schleifer presents these three elements in order of importance. This tripartite heuristic framework acknowledges the importance of social and political identities, intergroup perception and the practicalities of communication at various scales. It demonstrates that in order for psywar to be successfully waged, some specific mechanisms need to be in place. However, the links between the three elements of the framework are not really explored and there is little explanation regarding the order of importance. For instance, it is unclear why the target audiences are more significant than the messages themselves. The Yale Model of Persuasion (Hovland, Janis & Kelley, 1953) may have provided beneficial insights here. More generally, this tripartite framework points to an issue that has challenged the field of social psychology for quite some

time – how does one integrate the various levels of analysis, such as micro, meso and macro.

The substantive analysis of psywar commences in chapter 3 with overviews of the Yishuv's psywar against the British Mandate of Palestine, psywar in the Arab-Israeli wars from 1948-1982, the Israel-Lebanon War from 1985-2000, the First Intifada, the Second Intifada and more recent conflicts. The sheer breadth of the conflicts covered is impressive but at times the overviews of the conflicts lacked the detail that I felt they deserved. After all, there are multifarious social, political and indeed psychological antecedents to each of these conflicts, which at times seem to be simplified in this book.

In chapter 7, Schleifer focuses on the various themes, that is, the justifications, arguments and representations employed to inspire particular emotions in the ingroup and outgroup, characterising the Intifada. Some themes are identified as being particular to one group or the other. For instance, the theme of Israel violating international law was said to be prominent among the Palestinians, although the very same theme has also been applied by some Israel commentators to the Palestinians. Thus, there is much overlap between some of the themes that are delineated in accordance with group. This potential shortcoming may be attributed to the organization of the chapters – most are organized into "Palestinian themes" and "Israeli themes", which can sometimes obscure the reality that both groups frequently draw upon similar themes, motifs and representations in order to legitimize the ingroup and, in some cases, delegitimize the outgroup. For instance, in a recent social constructionist analysis of the speeches of Netanyahu and Abbas, some common motifs and social representations around intergroup threat were identified, thereby demonstrating the commonalities characterising the discourse of groups in conflict (Jaspal & Coyle, 2014).

Themes, like social representations more generally, are drawn upon strategically in accordance with context, politics, ideology and so on, and context is ever-evolving rather than static. Indeed, the focus on argumentation and rhetoric in many of the subsequent chapters led me to wonder whether the book would have benefitted from insights from social psychological theories of attitude formation, attitude change and social representations. Moscovici's (1988) Social Representations Theory, for instance, specifies the social and psychological mechanisms which facilitate the construal and dissemination of societal information. People construct reality by linking it to things they already know about and through the use of metaphors and other objectification devices. Social representations clearly form an important part of the psychological warfare, especially if such collective elaborations are disseminated far and wide to the audiences that Schleifer has identified as being important. By drawing upon these frameworks, the author would have added further theoretical depth to his argument and moved the focus of the book far beyond description and potentially into the terrain of prediction.

In the concluding chapter, Schleider makes a series of points about the characteristics of psychological warfare and its frequent deployment in both peacetime and in times of intergroup conflict. These are important and insightful. They allow the reader to identify a case of psywar. Although the book sheds light on the Arab-Israeli conflict and presents a descriptive account of psychological warfare, it makes less of a theoretical contribution to the field, primarily because the argument itself does not appear to be positioned within any particular theoretical framework. While reading through the various chapters of the book, I saw much potential for theoretical connections, particularly with social psychological theory. There was, for

instance, little acknowledgement of the theories of intergroup relations, such as Social Identity Theory (see e.g. Bar-Tal, 2000) or of aforementioned theories concerning the dissemination of societal information (e.g. Moscovici, 1988). Despite these limitations, the book focuses on the very interesting topic of psychological warfare and presents detailed insight into the use of this "tool" in the context of the Arab-Israeli conflict. It therefore constitutes a very useful resource for scholars interested in the Arab-Israeli context and, particularly, the long-standing role of psychological warfare in this intractable conflict. I believe that this book provides much food for thought and will benefits scholars and students who take this area of enquiry forward.

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